



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

NEWS

Office of the Governor

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RI AWARDED NATIONAL EDUCATION REFORM GRANT

NGA Grant Will Bolster Ongoing Efforts to Prepare Rhode Island High School Students to Succeed in College and in the Workplace

Governor Donald L. Carcieri today announced that Rhode Island is being awarded an “Honor States” grant by the National Governors Association (NGA) to fund Rhode Island’s ongoing efforts to improve education standards, strengthen science instruction, and prepare Rhode Island high school students for college. While the amount of the grant has not yet been released, Rhode Island requested approximately \$1 million over two years.

“We are committed to equipping all our public school graduates with the academic skills they need to enter college and the work force, confident that they can pursue their career goals,” Governor Carcieri said. “This grant will help us focus our education system on preparing high school students for success.”

Thirty-one states applied for the grants, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and administered by the NGA Center for Best Practices. Rhode Island was one of only ten states selected to receive a grant.

“Since the beginning of my administration, we have concentrated on enhancing public education,” Governor Carcieri noted. “In 2003, the Board of Regents issued new high school regulations and diploma requirements. Beginning with the class of 2008, graduation will be based not only on the number of completed course units, but on demonstrated skill proficiency.”

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The grant will target improved science instruction and the sequencing of science courses through a pilot project in five high schools. Improving science education has been one of Governor Carcieri's top education reform priorities.

"Recognizing the growing importance of math, science and technology, I created a Blue Ribbon Panel on Math and Science Education," Governor Carcieri said. "As part of the panel's deliberations, my wife, Sue, and I have listened to the suggestions of high school students throughout Rhode Island on how we can improve science education. These students made it clear that we need a better transition between middle and high school science courses, as well as increased opportunities for more challenging courses of study. By funding a pilot project on science instruction at five Rhode Island high schools, this grant will help us do that."

The grant will also fund a two-year work plan to expand on current efforts to transform the public education system to meet the challenge of a changing Rhode Island economy. In the first year, the program will define standards for college readiness in math, reading and writing. National consultants will then review these standards to assess their quality. The second year will focus on aligning these "college ready" standards to "work ready" expectations. Throughout the two year effort, Rhode Island will participate in the American Diploma Project Network with 17 other states.

Finally, working with Jobs for the Future (JFF), the grant will support expanded options for high school students to take college-credit courses. JFF will review current dual enrollment activities in Rhode Island, identify barriers and supports for such programs, and outline actions for improving and expanding these options for students.

The Statewide PK-16 Council, which Governor Carcieri created and chairs, will guide the implementation of the grant. The Council is comprised of the two education Commissioners, the chairs of the Boards of Regents and the Board of Governors, the Chairs of the Economic Policy Council and Human Resources Investment Council, the Director of the Department of Labor and Training and the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

Governor Carcieri's office applied for the grant on June 1st. The grant application was supported by letters from members of the Rhode Island House and Senate, the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council, the Office of Higher Education, the Chairs of the Board of Regents, the Board of Governors for Higher Education, as well as the Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education.

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NGA News Release

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TEN STATES NAMED 'HONOR STATES'

*Two-year Grants Enable States to Continue High School Reform
Aimed at Preparing All Students for Success in College and Work*

WASHINGTON—Capitalizing on the national momentum to dramatically increase high school graduation rates for all students in the United States, the National Governors Association, through its Center for Best Practices, today announced the selection of 10 states for the first phase of its Honor States Grant Program.

The program provides two-year grants to the selected states to continue work begun under **NGA Chairman Virginia Gov. Mark Warner's** [*Redesigning the American High School*](#) initiative. The work also builds on ideas to improve America's high schools outlined in the NGA/Achieve *Action Agenda* released in conjunction with the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools held here in February. The grants will fund governors' comprehensive state plans to raise high school graduation and college readiness rates.

After a thorough evaluation process, a committee, independent of NGA, selected the grantees who will implement new policies and tools to help more young people graduate from high school prepared for college and work success. The committee unanimously recommended 10 states receive grants: **Arkansas, Delaware, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island and Virginia**. The selected states are required to, at least, match their grant amounts dollar-for-dollar. States worked through a rigorous analytical blueprint to identify those *Action Agenda* items likely to be most effective in their states. Thirty-one states submitted detailed proposals based on elements of the *Action Agenda* customized to meet specific high school redesign and graduation goals.

"These Honor States grants will go far in helping continue the 'prairie fire' NGA has started around high school reform," said NGA Executive Director Raymond C. Scheppach. "When governors focus on change, good things can happen quickly."

American high schools were designed for a different era. Our education system today is not preparing our high school students for success in the 21st century global, information-age economy. According to a recent Manhattan Institute report, nearly one-third of America's young people fail to graduate, and nearly half of those who do graduate leave high school unprepared for college-level work at a time when the skills required by colleges and employers are increasingly the same. Only about half of

African-American and Hispanic youth make it to graduation day and fewer than 20 percent are ready for college-level academics.

“We have a moral imperative, as Americans, to make sure that ***all*** of our students graduate from high school with a range of options and opportunities open to them,” said Tom Vander Ark, executive director of education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “Thanks to the strong leadership and commitment by the governors in the 10 Honor States and others, we are moving forward with momentum toward building an American high school system that will prepare every student for college, work, and citizenship.”

The 10 selected states submitted both short-term and long-term strategies for high school reform. Each proposal focuses on increasing college and work readiness of students through efforts such as improving standards, aligning curricula and assessments, and increasing the rigor of graduation requirements. Additional state strategies vary based on the specific needs and circumstances of the state. For example, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota and Rhode Island will use grant resources to expand college-level learning opportunities in high schools. Arkansas, Maine, Minnesota and Virginia will establish P–16 councils to streamline governance and improve alignment between high school requirements and postsecondary expectations.

Communications is another common theme among applicants. Arkansas, Delaware, Louisiana, Maine, and Minnesota all stressed the importance of raising students’ and parents’ awareness about the value of earning a high school and college diploma, and building community support for reform. Indiana and Minnesota concentrated their proposals on improving science, technology, engineering and math education. Massachusetts and Rhode Island plan to enhance their current data systems to better track performance of students, schools and districts. Detailed state-by-state proposal summaries are available at www.nga.org.

“This is an exciting time for the Center,” said NGA Center for Best Practices Director John Thomasian. “The Honor States program and the opportunities that follow will continue to enhance the Center’s mission of helping governors apply cutting edge solutions to real life challenges.”

The Honor States announced today will receive up to \$2 million in grant funds. The Honor State Grant Program is supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and administered by the NGA Center for Best Practices. The selection committee was chaired by Brenda Welburn, executive director, National Association of State Boards of Education. The other selection committee members were Pat Callan, president, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education; Ron Cowell, president, The Education Policy and Leadership Center; Christopher E. Goode, senior director—corporate government affairs & public policy, EMC Corporation; Charles Kolb, president, The Committee for Economic Development; Sandy Kress, partner, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP, Larry Rosenstock, CEO, High Tech High Learning;

and Stefanie Sanford, senior policy officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Grant awards are expected to be finalized within several weeks based on activities proposed in state plans.

An RFP for the second phase of Honor States Grants Program will be released at the NGA Annual Meeting in Des Moines later this week. As with the first phase, all states will be allowed to submit proposals. Phase two grants are designed to help states interested in smaller scale and more targeted high school reform initiatives, such as those described [*An Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools*](#) and [*Getting it Done: Ten Steps to a State Action Agenda*](#), which were released earlier this year.

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